

Appl. No. 10/606,086
Arndt. dated August 21, 2007
Reply to Office action of March 21, 2007

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

In the specification, paragraph [0021] has been amended to correct a minor typographical error.

Claims 1, 6, 9-20 remain in this application. Claims 2-5 and 7-8 have been canceled.

Claim 1 has been amended to include the features of canceled claims 2-5 and 7-8. As amended, claim 1 distinguishes over Francis and Harmon. Accordingly, reconsideration and withdrawal of the rejection in their 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are respectfully requested.

Although Francis discloses a ticket distribution system, the central distribution processor 10 and the box offices 12 thereof are functionally dissimilar from the affiliate computers, with their respective data bases, which are connected via applicants' distributed network with a central exchange for enabling multi-affiliate transactions. In Francis data is transmitted over a network, but is not stored or transmitted in the manner claimed. For example, the invention of amended claim 1 enables transactions to occur in at least three separate ways. First of all, affiliates can conduct transactions, such as buying and selling goods and services, electronically on their own affiliate computers. The affiliates can "share" goods or services with other affiliates, for example, by specifying transaction conditions. Secondly, information concerning the availability of goods and services can be loaded into the central exchange and matched with purchase requests. Finally, goods and services can be posted to the central exchange by an affiliate logging onto a special order system thereof and manually posting such goods and services.

Such transactional flexibility, utilizing transaction conditions as claimed, is not disclosed by either Francis or Harmon. Real-time, interactive transactions are accommodated by the invention of claim 1, as amended. Thus, transactional data is provided interactively to the affiliates, as opposed to the one-way ticket sales function described in Francis.

Harmon is also distinguishable because the invention of amended claim 1 provides a web-based interface for end customers, who are posted by the particular affiliates via their respective web sites. Transactions are done in real-time with the claimed invention and the results are posted to the respective affiliates' computers. For example, a customer can access the web site of affiliate A and thereon purchase goods owned by affiliates B, C and D, each of which has its respective affiliate computers modified to reflect the transaction. Affiliate A gets a purchase order covering the transaction and each of the affiliates B, C and D gets an invoice selling its goods or services.

Harmon's method is distinguishable because it involves charging credit cards for the value of contingent event tickets that do not exist, whereas the claimed invention involves goods and services that are immediately available for purchase in real-time. The central service administrator is thus able to ensure availability of the goods or services. Moreover, Harmon

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discloses a bid-recording system where inventories are displayed for auction and made available for bids. In the invention as claimed, the inventory of goods and services is displayed on public web sites and private listings. When purchased, order confirmation is handled in a real-time format and handled in one seamless transaction involving purchase of goods and services and database updating to reflect such transactions. Software is utilized to handle the electronic flow of data, which would normally require human intervention.

The Hagen reference was cited in combination with Francis and Harmon in connection with claims 6, 9 and 11 for the creation of affiliate web sites with customizable and default portions. However, the present invention enables affiliates to completely conceive and define their web sites and the content thereof, including customized e-mail configuration designed.

Satchel was cited in connection with claims 13 and 15 for forwarding shipping information to a carrier to ship goods, e.g. through intermediate shipping, and non-inventory goods ordering. However, it does not show the distributed network concept with the functions presently claimed.

Anderson was cited in connection with claim 16 for procedures for splitting group products and offering such bundled products and for unbundling, i.e. splitting and grouping of products. However, Anderson addresses methods in relation to processing bundled versus individual items in connection with order processing between two systems. The applicants' invention as presently claimed utilizes inventory stored in the database among the vendors as individual items, which can be bundled into groups for presentation to customers.

Independent claim 9 contains similar limitations, with the addition of a web site plug-in adapted for enabling affiliates to create their respective web sites. Method claim 14 contains method steps, which are comparable to the structural features of claim 1.

Based on the foregoing, all of the claims are in condition for allowance and notice to this effect is earnestly solicited. The examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if prosecution of this application can be expedited thereby.

I hereby certify that this paper is being filed by
facsimile transmission (571-273-8300) with the
U.S. Patent and Trademark Office.

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Respectfully Submitted,

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